


A
W O R D
T O
I S R A E L
In the
W I L D E R N E S S.
Or the Arraignment of
U N B E L I E F.

Shewing
The evil of Distrust, though in time
of the greatest Scurges: Wherein Un-
belief is tried and found guilty of great
Provocation.



B John Chisholm, Minister of the Gospe^l.

*Psal. 78. 19. They spake against God, they said,
Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?*

London, Printed for Francis Eglesfield, Book-
seller in St. Pauls Church-yard, 1668.

W O R D

TO

A R R I

IN THE

W I D E R

U M B E L L E

2381:07



TO THE
MOURNERS
IN
ZION.

Deaily Beloved,

I Am not Insensible that there are many who Sympathize with you; and have been ready to pour in Balm into Bleeding Wounds, to comfort you in the midst of your sorrows; and blessed be the Lord, the God of all Consolation, who hath stirred up any to this Work. But it hath been matter of wonder to me, that amongst the many Tracts that have been written to the Afflicted, so little hath been done to Obviate that sin, which most in that condition fall into, and few lament. It being taken for granted with most, that Streights and Troubles, will, if not justifi-

The Epistle.

He, yet greatly ~~extenuate~~ the evil of Distrust.

Having made a serious and narrow inquiry into the Scripture, I find that this Sin is otherwise spoken of, then the most (yea, and I fear the best) think of it.

We deem it such a failing, as God will easily wink at and pass over, but after due search, I perceive there is nothing that God sticks more at then this. We reckon it among the common infirmities of the Saints, but the Lord sets it in the highest rank of Provocations.

Considering how prone we are to run in this evil, and how greatly provoking it is, and what dangerous consequences of it are; I judged a word of Caution, might be as seasonable, as needful, and a few things suggested, might through Grace, prove an Antidote against this Contagion.

And until some other person be awakned to speak more fully to so useful a Subject, I hope a plain Proposal and serious Consideration of what is here offered, may prevent much sin and sorrow.

I judge it a more noble task to endeavour the preventing of trouble that it come not, then to remove it when it hath taken hold of us.

Dedicatory.

The onely sure and safe way to keep off sorrow, is to lay a Bar in the way of sin.

As sin is the womb out of which all troubles do proceed, so Unbelief is especially both Mother and Nurse, of all the sorrows of the Godly, not onely as it procures, but improves them.

The sins of Gods people have been very great in former times, which have provoked the Lord to inflict many sore evils upon us: But if to all our other sins, we shou'd add a sin of our afflicted condition more provoking, than all those of former times; what can we expect, but that God should swear that we should not enter into his rest, and that the Lord should bury (at least) all this Generation in the Wilderness.

I know many are the fears, if not the settled thoughts of some wise and good men, that this present Generation will not see the good which hath been earnestly pray'd for, and is affectionately expected.

I do not pretend to know the reasons that many have for this conjecture, but I think I may without presumption conclude, that if the Lord cause us to fall in our wilderness, as he did that Generation which came out of Egypt, it is because we have been too like them in that which was their Provocation.

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) The Epistle

I must confess, I am not satisfied how this kind of Unbelief (which denies or strongly disputes against the Providence of God over his people, in time of distress) came to be so favourably thought of, as to be reckoned amongst the infirmities and weakness of Saints; since it was of old counted, The Provocation. I cannot apprehend that the accession of more Light, and the addition of new Experience can lessen that which was so great before.

Let those who will not take pains to read this little Tract purposely written, to discover the provoking nature of unbelief; yet be intreated to behold it as in a Glass, in the History of the Children of Israel, whom the Lord slew in the Wilderness for this sin; can you think for a small thing, for which God cut off above six hundred thousand men?

But especially consider and wonder at the Lords proceedings against Moses, and that but for one offence of this kind. He was not admitted to go into Canaan, though he did affectionately desire it, and pleaded earnestly with God.

Num. 20. 12. And the Lord spake unto Moses, Because you believed me not to sanctifie me in the Eyes of the Children of Israel, ye shall not bring this
Con-

Dedicatory.

Congregation into the Land which I have given them.

Though Moses is taxt but this once of unbelief, and doubtless his unbelief did not shew it self as theirs did in murmuring: all that seems in the Story to be charged upon him was his not expressing his faith and confidence in God, and endeavouring to vindicate his Providence, and stay the murmurings of the people. His omitting to sanctifie God before the people, and to profess his dependence upon him, is here condemned as a not believing him. And for this kind of unbelief once charged upon him, Is there such a Bar laid in his way to Canaan, that all his Interest could not remove? He that could obtain any thing of God in other cases, could prevail for a whole Nation at once, Exod. 33. could not be heard speak for himself in this case, Deut. 3. 26. The Lord was wroth with me for your sakes, and would not hear me; and the Lord said unto m^e, let it suffice thee, speak no more unto me of this matter.

And can we hope that we shall fare better than these? Surely no. Our unbelief cannot but be much more provoking, in as much as it is much more inexcusable.

The Epistle

It is indeed a day of many fears, and they are not groundless, if we consider the subtil and unwearied attempts of Enemies, or the incorrigibleness of this Nation, under unusual judgments. But though we may fear sore evils both from God and men, yet let us banish sinful fears, and remove far from us all distrustful thoughts of Gods Providential care over his people, in all the evils that may come upon them.

Let us never fear that God will leave his Children in the Wilderness, into which he hath led them, and out of which they might find a way if they could leave him; But rather conclude that God hath brought us under a sentence of Death, that we might not trust in our selves, but in him that raised Jesus Christ from the dead.

He that raised him will raise his Witnesses, whose dead bodies have layn in the open Streets, and if the Spirit of the Lord enter into them, and they stand upon their feet, Deliverance will hasten.

If any thing suggested prove an Antidote against unbelieving fear, and do any way contribute to the begetting of a Spirit of Courage and Faith, so keep close to God, to depend upon him, and wait for him.

Dedicatory.

in all the streights that we may be brought into, I shall rejoyce as having attained my end.

We do not know what days we may yet be cast upon, or what troubles may abide the people of God, if we meet with none but what have been in former Ages, we have reason to believe from Experience, but if we should fall under such tryals as never any Age of the Church did produce, yet we have reason to believe from the promise, so that Distrust would then have no excuse.

The Apostles way of Reasoning is observable, and oh that we could learn of him in this particular, 2 Cor. 1. 10. Who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver. we are able to go thus far with him, who sees not that God hath done great things for his people, and for this Nation, to deliver it from Popish designs, and Plots against it; the Lord hath disappointed Enemies of all sorts, and we must acknowledg that he doth still deliver. Our fears (through mercy) are not come upon us, nay, our Peace and Liberties are continued beyond our expectations; Let us learn to go a little farther with the same Apostle, and say as he did, in whom we trust, he will yet deliver us.

The Epistle.

If our Fears do but awaken our Faith, and we can say with David, Psal. 56. 3. What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee. Having learnt to depend upon God in difficulties, we shall in a little time be able to rejoyce in Tribulation; and say as he did, ver. 4. In God I will praise his word, in God have I put my trust, (and remarkable is what follows) I will not fear what Flesh can do unto me.

Fear calls in Faith to succour him, and Faith soon casts out those fears which did afflict him. Oh that we could imitate him, and in the day of our fears, call in our Faith, and our ancient Experiences, and encourage our selves in the Lord our God, and wait quietly for his Salvation.

How sweet such a frame of Spirit would be to our selves, how much it would contribute to the making the Name of God glorious; what convictions it will leave upon the Spirits of men concerning the Power of Godliness, a little Time and your Experience will evince.



Heb. 3. 8, 9, 10.

*Harden not your hearts, as in the Pro-
vocation, in the day of Temptation,
in the Wilderness, &c.*

Should I take notice of the Context, I could not pass by many things which would present themselves to our consideration, nor avoid such an expence of time, as would prevent what at present I intend. Let it suffice to know, that the people to whom the Author directs this Epistle, were a professing and afflicted people. The great design that he drives at, is to establish them in the Faith, and to comfort them in their Sufferings: Insisting upon the former, he lays the great Example of *Israel*

B

before

before them, for their Caution: in which is considerable,

First, The persons propounded, *Israel your Fathers.*

Secondly, The Stage upon which they are presented, *in the wilderness.*

Thirdly, Gods Dispensations to them-ward, *they saw his works.*

Fourthly, Their carriage under and after all this, *They tempted and proved me.* They would not believe upon all the proofs and experiences that they had, but would still be putting God upon new proofs.

Fifthly, Gods resentment of this, He was provoked, and grieved; He was angry, because of such unworthy carriage; and he was grieved because it was from a people so near him, and so much beloved.

Sixthly, We have the aggravation of their sin, and the reason of this Provocation; it was for a long time, and after large experience of Gods ways.

Seventh.

Seventhly, We have a Comment upon this by the Holy Ghost, discovering the rise of the Sin; it is charged partly upon their vills, and partly upon their Understandings; Perverseness in the one, and Darkness in the other. They erre in their hearts, and they have not known my wayes.

That I may make a plain way to the Doctrine I purpose to insist upon, take a brief Explication of some terms in the Text. I will touch no more, than I must of necessity; and these no further then to make way to the Doctrine: The rest of the particulars will fall in, in the handling of this.

It is needful to know, what every word imports in this Clause. *In the Provocation, in the day of Temptation in the Wilderness.*

These all relate one to the other: If you ask what the Provocation was, he tells you it was the Temptation: If you demand, how this must be understood, and where fixed; he tells in the Wilderness,

But you will next inquire, VVhat particular Time and Action this points at, in the Wilderness?

Some would have it to intend the whole Forty years, in which they did often provoke the Lord.

But others judg, that the Holy Ghost points at some special Provocations in their passage through the Wilderness; and they fix them principally upon *Exod. 17. 7. They tempted the Lord, saying, Is the Lord among us, or not? And upon Numb. 14. 11. How long will this people provoke me? how long will it be ere they believe me?*

The surest and safest way is to follow the Scripture it self, in expounding these Terms: We shall find that *David*, from whose 95. Psalm, these words are taken, does himself explain them, *Psal. 78. vers. 17, 18, 19, 20, 40, 41.*

In which he plainly tells us, How the *Israelites* tempted, provoked, and grieved the Lord in the Wilderness. Their sin, he says, was unbel-

unbelief, and what kind of unbel.
 also he informs us, viz. a Distrust of
 his Providential care of them, and
 Fatherly provision for them in that
 Wilderness, and of his Power and
 Truth; whether he could or would
 lead them thorow it to the good
 Land he had promised them. They
 said *vers. 19. Can God provide a Ta-
 ble in the wilderness? Thus, says the
 Holy Ghost, they speak against God.
 You cannot speak worse of God,
 nor more to his provocation, than
 when things run low with his peo-
 ple, to question, whether he can, or
 will provide for them.*

God observes this of those Hypo-
 crites, in *Mal. 1. 33, 14. your words
 have been stout against me, saith the
 Lord.*

He insisteth again upon this, *v. 20.
 Can he give Bread also? Can he give
 Flesh to his people? But how does
 the Lord resent this? when he
 heard this he was wrath, ver. 21. This
 was an evil not to be born withal any*

longer; and as men that are offended will over with the matter of offence once and again, so does the Holy Ghost repeat their sin again and again, *ver. 22.* Because they believed not God, and trusted not in his Salvation, and *ver. 40, and 41.* How often did they provoke him in the Wilderness, and grieve him in the Desert; yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the holy One of Israel. In all which we see plainly, that this great Provocation was Unbelief, and a distrustful bounding of Gods Power and Goodness; and this is such a sin, that God will not pass it by in his people, without special notice taken of it, and expressing just indignation against it. So that we have a very plain and easie path to this Truth;

Doct. God is highly provoked, when his people distrust his Providence, though they be in a Wilderness.

For the proof of this, I need not say much, the referring you to what God said and did upon Israels distrust

is enough to confirm it (though they had as much ground and colour of reason for what they said and did; as it is possible for any after them to have). I have given you already an account of what God said upon this; and you see, his language is like that of one greatly incensed; and if that be not proof sufficient, see what he did; he slew all that Generation in the Wilderness; nay, he would not let *Moses* and *Aaron*, go into *Canaan* because they had not been careful to sanctifie his Name before them, in bearing witness against this their Distrust of God at the first appearance of it.

To make this Doctrine look more towards us, let us consider; that it refers not so much to a Place, as to a Condition. Wheresoever a people are, if their Condition resemble *Israel's* in their passage from *Egypt*, they may be said to be in a Wilderness.

God sets out the afflictions and troubles of his people in the latter dayes,

dayes, by this Allusion, *Hof. 2. 14.* *I will bring her into the wilderness;* which imployes two things, First, A condition which shall be very barren of all outward Comforts: This is noted, *Hof. 2. 12, 13.* *I will destroy her Vinyards and Figtrees, and make them a Forrest, &c.* God would make her Land like a Wilderness, a Land that was not sown, *Jer. 2. 2.*

Secondly, It was a place, thorow which was no beaten path. So that, as there was no comfortable Being in it, so there was no ready way out of it, *Psal. 107. 40.* *He causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there was no way.*

He bringeth even Princes and the great ones of the Earth into such streights, that they are at a loss, and can find no way out. The meaning of this Doctrine is this, That if God should bring his people into such a condition through trouble and affliction, that they should see no way of Supply in it, nor any probable way

way out of it, yet it is a Provocation for them to distrust God: No streights can excuse, much less justify the distrust of Gods people. What ever plea Unbelief may seem to have, it will be found a great Provocation. And the Reasons of this are evident.

Reason the first. Distrust of God, though in streights, is a denying him to be God; it is a bringing of him and all his Actions, to the proportion and standard of the Creature. It is in effect to say, he is like one of us. And, as God could not bear this language, when it impeacht his Holiness, (Psal. 50. 21. *Thou thoughtest I was such a one as thy self*): So he will not digest it, when it denies his Almightyness. When we limit the Holy One, and shut him up in the bounds of former Experiences, or present Probabilities; we do plainly deny him to be God. If we will own him to be God, we must expect from him things sutable to his Almighty

mighty-Power and Goodness, I mean where we have the Concurrence of his promise. We should say to any Difficulty that lies in the way of any promised mercy, as *Zechariah* says, *Zech. 4. 7. what art thou, O great Mountain?* When carnal Reason would come in, and proportion our hopes and expectations to the probabilities on the one side, or difficulties on the other, we should answer it with those words of the Lord, *Isa. 55. 9. As the Heavens are higher than the Earth, so are my wayes* (saith God) *higher than yours.* Indeed, were not his wayes above ours, wherein would he appear to be God? If we could expect nothing from him, but upon the terms we expect them from others, how should we keep an awe, and dread of him in our hearts. Remember this, Unbelief hath a mixture of Atheism in it, and must needs provoke.

Reason the second. It is a secret questioning, sometimes an open Re-
proach.

proaching the Attributes of God. It sets up Carnal Reason, and Mans wisdom in the Judgment Seat, and brings all the Attributes of the Blessed God to the Bar, where they are censured and sentenced at the pleasure of these blind and bold Inquisitors. Sometimes they fall fowl with his Power, *Psalm. 78. 19, 20. Can God furnish a Table in the Wilderness?* At another time they reproach his Wisdom, as if he knew not how to save; either to prevent misery, or bring deliverance, *Psalm. 73. 11. How doth God know? is there Knowledge in the most High?* And his Truth and Faithfulness seldom escapes them: David himself stumbled upon these, *1 Sam. 27. 1. And David said in his heart, I shall now perish one day, by the hand of Saul.*

And this Distrust is commonly accompanied either with a denial of former Experiences of Gods providential Actings, or else with a loading them with false and unworthy Imputa.

putations. Either we say that all the good which God hath done his people was by chance, the Finger of God was not in it; and so that Grave which buries our present hopes and expectations, swallows up all our past experiences, and we become in a moment as if we had never known any thing of Gods Providence: Or, if we come not to a denial of the Providence it self, we arrive at something worse, to put the basest Constructions upon the best Dispensations; as *Israel* in their Provocation did: who said of that glorious Deliverance out of *Egypt*, that they were brought into the Wilderness to be slain there, *Exod.* 14. 11, 12. and *Exod.* 17. 3. Now such Reflections as these which are frequently the attendants upon distrust, must needs be greatly provoking.

Reason the third. It casts a visible Dishonour upon God before men. Distrust and Diffidence are seldome carried so secretly, but they find some vent,

vent, and are often in their workings exposed to the observation of others, yea, and they the enemies of God and Religion; and before these God is dishonoured two wayes.

First, The very name of God suffers. For when his enemies see those who have followed God, and professed to know him to fall in their hopes, and to sink in their spirits, they believe God himself is fallen in these men affections and esteem; they begin to think that there is no profit in serving God, and that these men do now repent their choice. But when men can walk chearfully, and keep up their hopes and comforts at a high rate in times of trouble and affliction, it glorifies God before men, and testifies to all that God is worthy to be chosen and loved for himself, and that it is good drawing nigh to him. When men see us walking as the Prophet did, *Hab.* 3. 17, 18, 19. rejoycing in God when all outward comforts fall; it leaves them con-

vine'd that there is an excellency in God, which they are not acquainted withal. Nay, when we can, not only comfort our selves in God, and content ourselves with him in a Wilderness, but go into a Wilderness for him as *Moses* did, this tells all the world that God is worth injoying: But when we are sad and dejected because we are brought into some streights, it makes men conclude that there is little comfort in walking with God, and that God alone is not enough for a man to live upon.

Secondly, God is dishonoured by this distrust through that reproach which is cast upon Religion, and the power of Godliness.

VWhen men can bear up no further than the power and strength of Reason will carry them, and those who profess Godliness walk by common rules and carnal Principles, their observers say; Either these men are not Godly, or Godliness is no such thing as they would make it. By
your

your profession of Godliness, your enemies are brought to an expectation of some singular thing from you, something to which their Principles will not reach, or else they will not be convinc'd that there is any great matter in Godliness; they expect that it should carry you on in difficulties when they should pause, if not retreat, and that it should bear you up where they should sink: And if you can do this, and the frame of your spirits be singular as your actions, you may regain some of that honour that Religion has lost; and you will make it manifest, that the same spirit is in you which was in the Apostles and Primitive Christians. It was easie for an ordinary eye to see an extraordinary spirit in them, *Acts* 5. 41. *2 Cor.* 6. 10. *Col.* 1. 11. But if in times of trial you sink into a lowness of spirit, and walk by beggarly Principles, who have talked of and professed higher, men will conclude this was all but talk, and that Godliness hath nothing

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in it but Pretensions, and Positions suited and accommodated to the Interests of those that profess it, and that it hath no inward principles fitted to the Doctrines and Assertions of its Professours. Now what a Provocation must this be, to help such a base Opinion ~~as~~ this into the world, or to confirm and strengthen it, where it hath taken some hold in the minds of vain men.

Reason the fourth. It speaks plainly the heart to be naught, and is a Demonstration of the unsoundness and insincerity of it, under all former professions. It tells us, that all that was done before, was but in Hypocrisie: And what is more abominable than this? VVe find nothing so much insisted on by the Holy Ghost in aggravating the miserrand ages of *Israel*, as their distrust of God, *Psal.* 78. 32. *For all this they sinned still,* (and he adds, as if they had no other sin) *and believed not for his wondrous works.* Hence he argues their Hypocrisie.

poerifie, *ver.* 35, 36, 37. As if he had said, Sometimes they would be brought to some acknowledgment of Gods Goodness to them, and Care for them, yet this was but lip-labour; and he infers from hence, that their hearts were not right with him, nor were they stedfast in his Covenant.

There is nothing more certain than this, that those who do but feignedly close with God in times of prosperity, will start in times of tryal; and such falterings then are pregnant testimonies of their flattering with God before.

Departing from God in affliction, gives the lie to former Profession, and tells us that such a one never took God for his chief good, for then he would be content with him alone: Such a one never yet entered into Covenant with God as Almighty, and All-sufficient; never lookt upon God as *Abraham* did, as his Shield, and his exceeding great Reward, *Gen*, 1.7. 1.

No, he took God to be a Servant to some Interest, which he thinks will best stand now without him; and finding no further use of his Profession, he would fain find some plausible reason for the dismissing of it. Therefore he aggravates every Difficulty and Hazard, and makes them unanswerable Objections, as if God had led him into manifest Inconveniencies, and had made no Provision against them. Thus it was with *Israel*, they would take every occasion of quarrelling with *Moses* from pretended Difficulties, and Inconveniencies which did arise, and they deemed these to be Insupportable and Incurable. But what was in the Bottom of all this? They hankred after the Garlick and Onions of *Egypt*, they would fain go back to these. It is very hard to keep a man steady in his Profession under streights, whose heart is not right with God.

Therefore the Apostle cautions us, to take heed of the unbelief of the heart,

heart, *Heb. 3. 12.* Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. If the heart be not right for God, it will surely cause a man to depart from him at one time or other. The Holy Ghost notes this in the Text, as the ground of all their Distrust: *They are a people that do erre in their hearts.* Their hearts are not right with me, therefore they Distrust me.

Reason the fifth. It speaks us grossly ignorant of the wayes of God; which must needs Provoke, after frequent Opportunities and Advantages given us, of acquainting our selves with them. This was the Aggravation of *Israels* sin in this place, that they who had seen so many of Gods wonderful works, and had been so disciplined in *Egypt*, and in the Wilderness, should yet be ignorant of the Wayes of God. What should be expected at last, but that God should lay them by as a company of unteachable Dunces? God is not only provoked

(20)
voked but grieved at this, that he should be so long teaching them, and they learn so little.

Obj. But you will say, Is it possible that *Israel* could be ignorant of the ways of God, who had seen all his wonders in *Egypt*, and at the Red-Sea, and afterwards in the *VVilderness*?

Ans. *Israel* was not simply ignorant of these things, but they were not mindful of them, at least; at such times when they should have improved them for their Faith, and Hope in God; they carried themselves unworthily after such experiences, even as if they had never seen or heard of any such thing. *VVhen* they met with any new difficulty, they behaved themselves as if that were the first, and they had never been carried thorow any before.

We shall find *Israel* acting and reasoning at sometimes, as if God had never done any thing extraordinary for their deliverance; as if they had never seen so much as a little Finger

of after

of Providence put forth for them ; as if they had been preserved from the rage of the *Egyptians*, and from the ruine and misery to which they were often appointed, onely by some Accidents , or Chances , and God had stood Newter all the while, *Psal.* 106. 21, 22. *They forgot God their Saviour, who had done great things in Egypt, wondrous things in the Land of Ham and terrible things at the Red-Sea.*

They were as Distrustful and Unbelieving, as if God had never appeared in bringing them out of *Egypt*, and they had seen nothing worth their Observation in that Wilderness, but the Discouragements which lay before them.

Now do you think that God can bear this, that those who had seen so much of the stretched-out Hand of God, and contributed to the making his Name fearful with praises (as they had done, *Exod.* 15. 11.) should after all this, walk and act as if these things

things had been only some Dream or Fancy? No, God will not bear it, *Psal. 106. 23. Therefore he said, he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach; to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.* Now as Unbelief is accompanied with an Unmindfulness of what he has done, so also with a great and palpable Ignorance of what God is doing. There are certain wayes of Providence, in which God walks towards his people, which men that are not skild in, are discouraged from, and fill'd with fears, but those who understand them are not troubled at. And indeed, the most of the troubles and fears of Gods own people do arise, from the too little acquaintance that they have with Gods wayes. The laying a few of these before you, may be a great cure to unbelief, and prevent a great deal of sinful fear which *Israel* run into, because they had not known his wayes.

The

The Wayes of God here intended, may be such as these:

First, It is Gods way, to suffer great Enemies and Oppositions to arise against that work and people, which he intends signally to own. It hath been thus in every Age, and is like to be so to the end.

When God chose *Israel* from among all the Kindreds of the Earth to be his, and intended to bless them above all others, and put his Name upon them; What Enemies did appear against that people? In *Egypt*, how was *Pharaoh* set upon their ruine! then in the Wilderness *Amaleck* in-deavours to cut them off; and in *Canaan*, they had all the Nations round about them, *Psal.* 83. 6, 7, 8. *The Tabernacles of Edom, and the Ishmaelites, of Moab, and the Hagarens; Gebal, and Ammon, and Amalek, the Philistines, with the Inhabitants of Tyre.*

I might multiply Instances in every Age, of the Potent and Formidable

Ad-

Adversaries of the people of God. In the first planting of the Gospel, what opposition did appear against a Company of poor Fishermen, when they began to Preach Christ crucified and risen from the dead. Some by Authority indeavoured to silence them, some by Subtilty to insnare them, others Combined to destroy them; that it is a wonder that the Rage of the Enemy hath not prevailed all along to root up all the godly.

And as great Enemies have risen up against Gods people: So also, against the work which God hath set a Foot in the world. *Pharaoh* did not onely hate the *Israelites*, but the work which God was doing among them. He would have bin rid of them, but he would not let them go to serve the Lord. When God had them in the Wilderness, and was about to set up his Worship and Ordinances amongst them, what hindrances do arise from among themselves? How oft do they quarrel

quarrel with *Moses*, and resolve to make a Captain to carry them back again, and instead of promoting Gods instituted Worship, how prone are they to run to Idolatry ?

When afterwards they were Captives in *Babylon*, and the time of their deliverance from thence drew nigh, the Day dawned towards it, God had raised up eminent Instruments, as *Ezrah*, *Nehemiah*, *Zerubbabel*, and *Zechariah*; what Opposition doth this work meet withal, from *Sanballat*, *Tobias*, and others ; so that the Prophet takes notice of a Mountain, yea a great Mountain that lay in the way of those men whom God used in his work, *Zech.* 4. 7.

And when the Lord sets on foot the Reformation in the latter dayes, and is about to bring out his Church from Mystical *Babylon*; we find great difficulties do occur, such as threaten to swallow up the Man-child, as soon as he is born, *Rev.* 12. 4. Now this hath been Gods way, and constant course,

course, to carry his people, and his Work thorow great difficulties. He could keep down Enemies as easily as cast them down; he could make every man kind and fair to his people, as he did *Esaú* to *Jacob*; and help forward his work, as he did *Cyrus*: But, to glorifie his Name, and exercise his peoples Faith, he will carry his work thorow the thickest of his Enemies, and their strongest opposition. This being known to be Gods way from the beginning, his people should prepare for, and expect these things: And they have no reason to be discouraged or to despond, because things fall out according to former experiences and their expectations.

Secondly, It is a usual way of God after he hath given his people hopes of some special Mercy, to bring them to a great loss before he gives it in to them.

When he hath brought some Good very nigh them, and raised their expectation, he suddenly crucifies all the

the means leading to it, so that they see the Mercy lying dead before them; and if they go round about it, and view all the means which might render it probable, it seems to them to be like those dry Bones which the Prophet saw, *Ezek. 37. 2.*

God made a promise to *Abraham* of blessing all Nations in his Seed: but before he sees this made good; *Sarahs* womb is dead, and *Abrahams* body is dead also.

Joseph has Prophetical dreams of his Honour in his Fathers family: but before this is made good he is sold, and when he gets a little Credit and Respect in a Strange Country, he is cast from thence into Prison, and all probabilities of his preferment lie buried in a Dungeon.

David had promises of the Kingdom after *Saul*, and he rises fairly towards it for a time, he comes to be a great Courtier, a Favorite with *Jonathan* and the people: but before he comes to enjoy this, he must be dri-

ven from Court, and from his own House, yea out of the Kingdom, and forc'd to serve a strange Prince.

Thus when God promises to restore his people *Israel*, and to unite *Judah* and them together, he says, he will first bring them into the Wilderness, *Hos. 2. 14*. He will lose them as to their own apprehensions, and bring them into such troubles and distresses, that they shall not see the way out of them, nor perceive any way leading to that good which he intends them. Gods way is to crucifie Mercies as they are in the hands of every Creature, that we may look only to him for Salvation. Wicked men are watchful to stop everp gap, where any good might come in, and by this means they help forward the Mercy, for they drive us more to God, and so nearer to the Mercy which they would prevent. Now they who know this to be Gods way, will yet keep Hope alive, though the means leading to the good they hope for, be dead.

Third.

Thirdly, Gods way is, not to carry on great works for his peoples good, without great Intermissions, suffering them to fall back by some notable Relapses. If he do not altogether crucifie the means, yet he suffers the work it self to receive some deadly Blow for a time. Thus it was with *Israel*, and that work which was to give them both the Land of *Canaan*, and the Instituted Worship of God. How fairly and smoothly does this go on for a long time together? God instructs them concerning his Ordinances, furnishes them with Laws, and Statutes, carries them through the Wilderness, so that they were come to the very borders of *Canaan*, and seemed even ready to enter; Spies are sent out on purpose to discover the Land & they wait but for their return. But when it is come thus far, what a strange Relapse doth it suffer; and for their Unbelief, they are carried quite back again into the Wilderness; as if the Lord intended to carry them

back to *Egypt*. If you peruse the History, you shall find that they recovered not this, in less than Forty years : After so long a stop, it was in the same posture in which we find it, when *Caleb* and *Joshua*, with others were sent out to spie out the Land : And as it was in the bringing them out of *Egypt*, and the first settling of his Worship among them, so it was in the restoring it unto them, when he called them out of *Babylon*. How did the Work begin to flourish in *Ezra's* time ? what progress did he make in it, so that things were like to go on without any rub ? Yet what a blow did the Work of building the Temple receive, so that it was hindered in the Reign of *Cyrus*, *Ahasuerus*, and *Artaxerxes*, to the second year of *Darius*, *Ezra* 4: 5, 6, 7.

If we look nearer home, we shall find a Confirmation of this truth. The Reformation, begun in *England* by King *Edward* the sixth, suffered a Relapse in *Queen Maries* days, and we

we were carried back again into the very same darkness out of which we were ascending.

This is a truth so plainly asserted in the Records of all Ages, in which any thing of Reformation hath appeared, that it must be confest to be a Way of God in all times, to suffer eminent works, to meet with eminent stops: and where this is known and considered, it cannot be thought ground of Distrust.

Fourthly, Gods way is to carry on his own work while it seems to be at a stand: Though it may meet with many stops, yet it never stands still. Though some of the VVheels seem to be fixt, yet others are moving which we see not. In those Intervals and Pauses which appear, God is still about his work. Perhaps, He lays-by some visible part of the Deliverance of his people, and of the Destruction of Antichrist; he suffers that part to stand still which our Eyes are most upon, but some part of it is still

still in hand; He is either preparing the Enemy for ruine, or fitting his people for Mercy. The sins of the *Amorites* must be fill'd up before *Abrahams* seed can possess the Land, and *Israel* must be fitted for *Canaan*, ere they can enter it. Now those very Providences which seem to retard general Mercies to the Church, do in a secret way hasten them; for they do prepare and make ready some things which do necessarily conduce to them.

Fifthly, Gods way of working is such; that no difficulties can stand before him when he will appear. What can lie in the way of God, and the Salvation promised to his people, but Dust and Ashes? And what is all the opposition of the world before him; more than Chaff before the Wind? or Stubble before the Fire? Bring the strongest Thorns of the Wilderness, and make the stoutest Fence you can, and see whether you can hedg up his way, *Isa. 27. 4.* Who would.

would set the Thorns and Bryers against me in Battel, I would go thorow them, and would burn them together. I would first break thorow and despise their opposition, and then return and chastise their folly in their destruction. Thus God dealt with *Pharaoh*: he raised as much opposition as he could against God, but He led his people through the midst of all their Opposers while their hands were bound, and then he let them loose again to follow *Israel* into the Red-Sea, where he buried them under the walls which shelter'd *Israel*.

And were those great Oppositions which were raised against the building of the Temple, more successful? *Zeck. 4. 7. Who art thou, a great Mountain, before zerubbabel; thou shalt become a plain.* Who art thou? It is answered, A great Mountain. But what is a Mountain, yea a great Mountain, or all the Mountains of the world before him? But as the small dust of the ballance, *Isa. 40. 15.*

All Oppositions and Difficulties, will seem Inconsiderable in the way of that work which we look upon as Gods, to him that knows his ways.

Sixthly, It is Gods way to increase his people, by those Providences which are likeliest to destroy them. Those Afflictions and Persecutions which have befallen the People and Church of God, have threatned the ruine of the whole; but indeed have not only added to their stature in Grace, but to their increase in numbers. Thus *Israel* did increase under a cruel bondage. It is said in *Exod. i. 12. The more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied.* And it is observable, that there was no considerable increase of *Abrahams* seed, till we read of their oppression. God promised to give *Abraham* the Land after four hundred years, and we find 200 of these expired before their coming into *Egypt*, and they were then but seventy souls, *Gen. 46. 27*, a small increase: But after *Josephs*

sephs death, and their oppression in the last two hundred years, they were grown to a vast Number, so that there went out six hundred thousand men of war, besides Levites, Women and Children, *Exod.* 12. 37. The same way hath God taken to raise a Gospel-seed, he hath multiplied the Professors of the Truth, by the Oppression and Rage of their Enemies. Therefore to despond, as if the Interest of Christ were sinking in the world because Persecution arises, is a gross piece of Ignorance of the ways of God, who multiplies his people by their troubles.

Seventhly, Another way of God, is to work by those whose Interest seems to lie most against his work. Rather than God will want instruments to deliver his people, and to set up his Instituted worship among them, he will make use of men much interested against it.

It is the policy of Satan to twist as many potent Interests together, as he
can

can to hinder the Kingdom of Christ, yet when the Lords time is come to deliver his people, he oft makes use of those whom we judge most engaged against it.

This is manifest in *Israels* deliverance from the *Babylonish* Captivity; *Israel* was then as the dry Bones, no visible means left for their enlargement: They were weak and unable to rescue themselves, they had no potent Allies, nor Friends to make terms for them. It was the Interest of the *Babylonians*, to keep them under in their Captivity; and if it could be hoped that they would part with them, yet they were never able to compass the building of the Temple in their poverty; neither could they hope for assistance in this, from those who had spoiled the Temple of all its Ornaments, and been enriched with its Treasures: Yet when the time comes for the building of the Temple, *Cyrus* shall let the *Jews* go; and rather than such a work shall want

Incouragement, he himself shall animate them in building, & furnish them with all things needful for this work: Nay (which is matter of Astonishment) he shall give up all the Treasures of the House of the Lord, though they were great, and were a considerable increase of the *Persian* wealth and greatness. Nay, which is yet more stupendous, he shall fetch them out of the House of his gods, though consecrated to them, and give them back to the God of *Israel*, *Ezra* 1. 7, 8, 9, 10. And although this work met with Obstructions; and evil Counsellours had suggested to the King. That it was against his Interest to suffer such a work as this to go forward; yet God inclined the hearts of the Kings of *Persia*, to favour and further it: As you may see, *Ezra* 6. 8, 9, 10. *Ezra* 7. 15. 20, 21. *Neb.* 2. 8. Now if we consult their interest, this could not be rationally expected from them: How could we hope that they should advance the

Worship of a God they did not profess to serve? Who could expect that they should incourage *Israel*, in that which would make them a distinct people from all the world, and thereby raise them, from being useful Servants, to become formidable Enemies? Yet when God will make use of men to help forward his Work, he will make them Blind and Deaf to their own Interests; they shall serve the Interests of God, while they seem to destroy their own.

Thus it shall be in the Deliverance of the Church from Mystical *Babylon*: God will work by those whose Interest that Antichristian Whore hath twisted together with hers against Reformation, and the Liberty of the Saints, from her cruel Bondage. For they who did agree together to give their power to the Beast, to support and uphold his Kingdom, shall also agree together to hate the Whore, and make her desolate, *Rev. 17. v. 12.* compared with the 16.

It is matter of Discouragement to many good men, to consider how many Powerful Interests are united, against the Interest of the Gospel and Reformation: But alas, when God will work, he can ingage those to assist, from whom in the Eyes of Reason, we have most cause to fear. And doubtless it is Antichrist's great security, that he sits upon many waters, and hath many considerable ones in combination with him: And though these seem to be inseparably fixed to him, so that they are in danger of sinking if he fall, or they start; yet will God not only pluck these away, but also strip him naked by those who have helped to adorne him.

To despond therefore, and say, *Jacob* is low, By whom shall he rise? is to forget, that God can and will raise him (rather than he shall sink) by those, whom we fear most will keep him down. When the Church is sic for Deliverance, rather than she

shall want help, God will work by his Enemies.

Last of all, It is Gods way to appear for the Salvation of his people, when their hearts and hopes are lowest. He comes at their Midnight, when they have no Light of Sense, and perhaps few have the Light of Faith. That of our Saviour is remarkable, Luke 18. 7, 8. And shall not God avenge his own Elect, that cry Day and Night unto him? I tell you he will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless when the Son of Man cometh, shall he find Faith on the Earth? Though there shall be found a spirit of prayer among the Elect, and I tell you (says Christ) God will avenge them, and that speedily too, and this I leave upon Record for their comfort: yet, when I come to deliver, I shall sorely find Faith concerning my Coming, and Avenging, among my praying people.

The Scripture is full of Instances to prove this Truth. When Abraham

is call'd to offer up *Isaac*, (and in him the great Blessing promised to all Nations) the Lord doth not appear for his deliverance, till the Knife be lifted up over him to slay him ; and *Abraham* sets a note of Observation upon this Providence, that it may be for Instruction, and Comfort to all the People of God, who shall meet with the like difficulties at any time, *Gen. 22. 14. He calls it Jehovah. Jireh* (and the Proverbial Glots upon this is very good) *In the Mount of the Lord it shall be seen.* It is not said, In the Mount God hath been seen, looking back to what God had done, but it looks forward to what God should do, and his people might expect in after Ages. *Moses* leaves this Gloss as a Prop to the Faith of Gods people, that when they are in as great streights as he was, they may be able to say, In the Mount, God will be seen. And this indeed hath been confirmed by Instances of great Note.

When *Israel* was in *Egypt*, and her bondage great, God sends *Moses* with a Message of Deliverance, and the hopes of this, refresh their hearts a little. But we find more Load laid upon their backs, which were ready to break before; so that the people begin to be angry with *Moses*, judging that he had made their Condition worse. Hereupon God begins to plague the *Egyptians*; this moves *Pharaoh* and his people, and they seem inclinable to let *Israel* go; and begin to treat about it; they treat and break, and renew their Treaty again; the *Israelites* are between hope and fear concerning the issue of this; but at last *Pharaoh* grows resolute and desperate, and not only refuses to let them go, but threatens *Moses* and *Aaron* with death, if they come any more in his sight, *Exod.* 10. 28. Now you may conceive the hearts of the Children of *Israel* are sinking, and they reason thus with themselves; If all this will not work our Deliverance

ance, then wo unto us; we see *Pharaoh* is resolv'd not to let us go; we must prepare for suffering and perpetual slavery, yea, and to bear whatever the wrath of an enraged Enemy can inflict upon us, who will surely be revenged for all that *Egypt* hath suffered, and so all these plagues with in the Conclusion and in Effect, fall on us. Thus dark in all probability were their apprehensions; but now the time is come to fulfil the Promise, and God appears at their Midnight, and brings them out with a high Hand.

Let us follow them into *Canaan*, where we find them sinning away their Freedom, and God gives them up into the hands of the *Philistins*, from whom he doth not deliver them till they are brought exceeding low. Their enemies we shall find were very high, and they as low, 1 *Sam.* 13. 3. 6. they were dispirited, their hearts failed them; so that many hid themselves in Rocks, Caves, and Thickets.

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high Places and Pits: they who had so much courage to assemble with *Saul*, followed him trembling, *ver. 7.* and these were but a very few, *v. 15.* about six hundred men, and these also unarmed, *v. 22.* and that their affliction might be pressed down and running over, their King and General had received a dreadful Check, a sad Message of his Rejection; and the Prophet that brought it was gone away, as if he would not stay to see the ruine of him, and that handful of men that followed him. Surely this people seem to be as near to destruction, as *Isaac* in the Mount; yet here was God seen, and Deliverance comes when it was never less expected or hoped for by a people.

Let us view them in their Captivity when they were in *Babylon*, and their Condition was as desperate as ever, *Ezek. 37: 1, 2, 3.* *Israel* was like a live company of dry Bones, yea, like *Tyre* Bones which had not a Grave afforded them; they were scattered, Bones from both

from Bone, and very dry; so that the Lord asks the Prophet, this Question: *Can these dry Bones live?* Probabilities of their Deliverance cease, and the Possibility comes now to be a Question, and it is so great a Question, that God only can resolve it: *Lord thou knowest*, says the Prophet: He only can tell what can be done in this Case, who can do what he will in any Case. Now when things are brought to this Extremity, then the Lord begins to work, *ver. 4, 5*. Again the Lord said unto me, *Prophe- sie upon these Bones, and say un- to them: O ye dry Bones, hear the word of the Lord.* Thus saith the Lord God unto these Bones, *Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you, and ye shall live, &c.* And as it was then, so it will be at the last and great De- liverance of the Church, from the like Tyranny of Mystical Babylon. The Beast so far prevails over the Wit- nesses, that they Prophesie in Sack- cloth a great while; but a little be- fore

fore the ruine of Antichrist, he overcomes, and kills the Witnesses, and insults over their dead Bodies, *Rev. 11. 7, 8, 9.* But now, when their dead Carcases have been exposed to the view of all the world, and the scorn of Antichrist hath been sufficiently manifested in Triumphant over them, and making merry for their Destruction; even then shall God raise up these Witnesses, and his Work and Cause in their Hands, to the Astonishment and Terrour of their Adversaries: And then, when the Whore thought she had gotten all, shall those Voices be heard; The Kingdoms of the World, are become the Kingdoms of our Lord and his Christ. And indeed, this is that which the Lord foretold long since, *Deut. 32. 36.* *The Lord will judge his people, and repent himself for his Servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none shut up or left.* Gods people have been too high, but never too low for him to work by: Therefore

the lower and faster they fall, the sooner we shall expect their Deliverance, if we judg as people that understand the Ways of God towards his people. But if we shall stretch our measuring Line over the Path of the Almighty, we shall afflict and perplex our own spirits, dishonour and provoke God, and give up our hopes upon every Cloud that arises, and all because we know not the Ways of the Lord. Thus I have shewn you that Distrust of God in streights, is a conviction of Ignorance concerning the Ways of the Lord, which he walks in towards us.

I may add also, It is a Demonstration of our Ignorance, touching the ways which we ought to walk in, towards him. For the ways of our Duty, aswel as the ways of Providence, are called the Ways of the Lord in Scripture, as is evident if we consult, *Psal.* 18. 21. *2 Cor.* 11. 6. *Psal.* 108. 5. And this is certain, he that is not mindful of one, seldom under-

understands the other; they who do mistake Gods ways of Providence towards them, commonly fail in the Duties to him. When *Israel* did misinterpret his Providences, they presently talked of going back into *Egypt*; and those Hypocrites in *Malachi*, when they saw that things went contrary to their expectation, cry out, *Mal.* 3. 14. What profit is there in serving the Lord, they are carried back again to their old Prophaness. Such persons shew an Ignorance in the ways of God, in three particulars: They know not, or consider not,

First, That it is our duty to hold on in the VVays of God, notwithstanding all the difficulties or darkneses that can arise. This is that which the Apostle exhorts unto, *Heb.* 12. 13. Make streight steps to your feet, let no Affliction or Trouble that you meet withal in the ways of God, turn you out of the way, or make your paths crooked; to make you pick

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and choose for your selves, the way which is smoothest and safest, and make you leave the way which is nearest; and to this purpose he sets the Example of Christ before them, who went strait on in his way, though the Cross, the Shame, and Reproach of men lay in it, *Heb. 12. 2.*

If thou knowest not the way in which God walks in towards thee, yet thou knowest the way in which thou art to walk with God. If there be not a Path of Providence visible, yet there is a way of Duty. Be sure thou keep close to this, and step not out of Gods way to avoid trouble; it is better to meet with danger in our Duty, than doubts about it. If now thou art careful to keep close to Gods revealed ways, when his Providential ways are Dark and Intricate; He will set a Mark of Honour upon thee, as he did upon those who kept close to him, and their duty, when it was dangerous, *Mal. 3. 16, 17.* Now Distrust carries men out of their
F way,

way, and while they are judging of Providence, they are forgetful of their own Duties.

Secondly, We should not only hold on in our duty, under the greatest difficulties and discouragements, but we should continue with hope, when we are lowest; God would have us plough in hope, and work as those who serve a good Master. Therefore, Hope is not only commended as the Priviledg, but commanded as the duty of Gods people, *Lam. 3. 26.* It is good that a man should hope, and quietly wait for the *Salvation of the Lord.* And *1 Pet. 1. 13.* the Apostle speaks after this manner, *Gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end.* Now there be three things which we should hope for, in the troubles which befall the Church: First of all, We should hope that God will in our days fulfil the Promises which he hath made, for the Restoring and Delivering of his Church. God would have

have us not only bear our part in the Afflictions which befall it, and pray for her Deliverance, but rejoyce also in the hope of her promised Salvation, *Rom. 12. 12. Rejoycing in Hope, patient in Tribulation.* Secondly, We should hope, that if the Mercies which we wait for, are not ready for us, yet our patient and prudent bearing of Trouble, may ripen and prepare them for the next Generation. Thirdly, If we see not any of the Promises fulfilled, which concern the good of the whole Church, yet we should expect good out of these troubles our selves, and hope for to receive benefit from our Afflictions.

Thirdly, We should not only hope, but rejoyce always in God; this is as positively commanded, as any duty, both in the Old and New Testament, *Psal. 33. 1. Rejoyce in the Lord, oh ye Righteous.* And *Psal. 97. 12. Joel 2. 23. Be glad, ye Children of Zion, and rejoyce in the Lord your God.* *Phil. 4. 4. Rejoyce in the Lord*
 F 2 *always,*

always, yea again, I say rejoyce. If thou art a Believer, thou art call'd to rejoyce in God, what ever thy condition be; and thou art bound in every thing to give thanks, and if thou hast no other consideration to make thee thankful but this, it is enough. Thy case, neither is, nor ever shall be so bad, but thou shalt have something to rejoyce in; and God who best understands thy Condition, bids thee rejoyce. But a wicked man was never call'd upon to rejoyce, by him who understands his Condition; and when he comes to know himself, he will confess that he hath been joyful without a cause, whereas thou art never without cause of rejoycing. Therefore do as *Job* did, when he could not rejoyce in the Providences of God, he rejoyced in his Name. *Blessed be the Name of the Lord,* says *Job*: Though the Providences of God were full of Darknes, his Name was full of Light and Comfort, when a view of Providence makes the heart sink

sink with fear; a sight of this by Faith, will raise it again to a frame of Blessing: And certainly, the dejections of Gods people, do most of them arise from an overlooking, or forgetting of the blessed Name of God, which is made up of loving-Kindness, Mercy, Goodness, and Truth, to all that are in Covenant with him; and speaks nothing but Consolation and Incouragement, whatever may be the Language of his Providences. Thus you see Unbelief speaks our Ignorance of Gods ways, whether they be ways of Providence in which he walks towards us, or ways of Duty in which we are to walk with him. I have been large upon this, because the Holy Ghost insisteth upon this, as the reason why *Israel* miscarried, and God was provoked.

Use of the Point.

IF Distrust in our streights be so great a Provocation, then let us search and try our ways, and make narrow inquiry into our hearts, and we shall find upon the Observation of their Frames and Carriages under the streights which we have met withal, more sin to be humbled for, than we have yet been sensible of. God hath many ways to bewilder a people, sometimes in their Personal, sometimes in their Family Concernments; sometimes by bringing private sometimes publick Interests to loss; sometimes by clouding our Civil, and sometimes our Spiritual Comforts; and sometimes again, He brings dark Providences upon us, and even frustrates our Expectation in every Creature: He takes away those who might have been Props to us, and perhaps hides himself, and we grope in thick darkness for the way.

Now

Now it is observable, that Affliction makes us look back upon former Conditions, and inquire what hath been the sin of them; as *David*, in his trouble sees the folly of his prosperity, *Psal.* 30. 6, 7. But our Prosperity seldom leads us back to consider, and mourn over the miscarriages that we have been guilty of, under Affliction. Notwithstanding we murmur, and express much Impatience, at least are full of Distrust, and Desponding thoughts, touching God's Providence and gracious Care over us: Yet we seldom recal those to judg our selves for them, and the reason is, we think these are Lapses of easie pardon, and that there is reason to be fetcht for these things from our Condition. We think our streights will justifie our distrusts; and we reckon these among the Frailties of Gods people: But what we have excused as frailties and Infirmities, the Holy Ghost condemns as Provocations. Wherefore if you recollect
your

your thoughts, you will find cause to bewail those things as great Provocations, which you have slightly passed over as ordinary weaknesses. Therefore let us judg our selves, for our distrust of God under former tryals; let us say as *David* did of himself, in the like case, *Psal. 73. 22. So foolish and ignorant was I, and as a beast before thee.* A sound and thorow humbling of your selves for these things, may prevent the like miscarriages for time to come.

Use 2.

The next and principal use of this point, is to caution Professours of Godliness, that they provoke not God as these *Israelites* did. Take the very words of the Apostle, and I hope you will give the more heed to this Use, as being proper and genuine, such as the Holy Ghost makes of it, *ver. 12. Take heed lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief.*

If God should bring you into a Wilderness, and you should meet with the same streights that *Israel* met withal, if you should see no way out of them; yet take heed of their sins: Remember, that all their streights and troubles did not justify their distrust. God would not pass by their Unbelief, though they were his own people, and the only people he had in the world; and they were the first that were so exercised, and so might plead Ignorance more than we can. And if he will not spare them, much less us, who have their experiences and the addition of many Ages beside to confirm us in our depending upon God. If he punished their distrust seven-fold, he will punish ours seventy times seven-fold.

Now, It being my great design to prevent this sin, to which *Israel* of old was so inclined, and to which (if I may judge by my own heart) we are still too propense. I shall lay a few Considerations before you; and
Oh

Oh that God would speak so effectually by them, to every one of our hearts, that this sin may be prevented.

First, Consider, It is a provoking sin: Its call'd in the Text the Provocation. *Israel* was guilty of many and grievous sins in the Wilderness; but none provoked God as this did. He express his displeasure against other sins, as their Idolatry, their whoredoms with the Daughters of *Moab*, their lusting after strange flesh, yet he did not set any such note of his Indignation, upon any of these, as as he did upon their Unbelief: This sin bears the name of the Provocation.

In other cases he did shew Mercy, and pass by the Transgression of his Heritage, but because of this sin he retained his anger, till he had consumed them in the Wilderness. Ye *Moses* who had given such notable proof of his Faith and Courage in *Egypt*, for one Act of unbelief, must

be debarr'd from going into *Canaan*,
Deut. 32, 51, 52. And though he
 could prevail for the whole Nation,
 when they had transgressed in making
 the Golden Calf, *Exod.* 33. 17. Yet
 he cannot prevail for himself, to go up
 into that good Land, no, though he
 prayed for it, and reasons from all the
 kindness that God had shewn him al-
 ready, *Deut.* 3. 24, 25. Yet he can get
 no other Answer, but this; *Speak to me*
no more of this matter.

Surely, God is angry with this sin,
 for which he will not be intreated by
Moses, and for himself, and for one
 Act of unbelief. Any thing that fa-
 vours of Infidelity, displeases God
 more than many crimes of Morality.
 God will note more, and visit your
 unbelief, and distrust of his Mercy,
 Goodness, and Truth, than all other
 your miscarriages under Affliction;
 and the reason is, because it is most
 opposite to that frame of Spirit,
 in which should honour God, especial-
 ly in time of trouble. For nothing
 doth

doth so expresse the Life and Power of Grace in times of Temptation and Affliction, as Believing, Hoping, and Rejoycing in God; this doth most eminently please him, and give him glory, and the contrary must needs as much displease and provoke him; and if we will not believe this to be a truth, God will make us feel it.

Secondly, Consider, You will not only provoke, but you will grieve the Lord by this sin: I hope, you will weigh this well, because it is also a Consideration in the Text, and shews how God is affected with the miscarriages of his people, when they distrust him. The word which we render grieved, is observable, *וַיִּזְעַק* which comes of *זָעַק* which signifies the Bank of a River, because grief makes the heart swell, as a River does when it overflows its Banks.

This Passion is attributed to God to shew what offence he takes at this sin; It is compounded of Anger and Love

Love, and Pitty. When we meet with that which is offensive in those we love. we are the more troubled, not at the Act simply, but because it is the Act of one whom we love.

It is observed, that the word here used, is not used any where in all the New Testament, save in this Chapter, to express Gods distast at *Israels* sin. But it is frequently used in the Old Testament; by this word the offence which *Rebeccah* took at *Esaus* hating of *Jacob* is expressed, *Gen.* 27. 46. She was angry with him for hating his Brother, but this was not all; to her anger was added grief and trouble of spirit, because it was her son *Esau* that hated him. Thus God is highly offended with the sin of unbelief, but he is grieved when this is the sin of a people so near him; so that we see such a Passion is attributed to God as is given to Parents, or Governours, when they see those whom they love, and have under their charge, running into y^ele and dangerous

gerous courses , notwithstanding all their care to reclaim them. Now a Child that hath any Remains of good nature in him , though he hath no grace , and will not be stopt in his full Career of sin , by all the Instructions and Corrections of his Parents , but grows regardless of their anger and displeasure , and hath born many a Check , Reproof , or Blow , without relenting ; yet hath melted when he hath seen his Father or Mother mourn for him , and lay his Condition to heart. Christian , Canst thou hear that God is provoked , and not fear ? Yea , Can you hear that he is grieved , and not melt ? Surely you can . not : Grace is the most ingenuous thing of the world . It is the best Nature , for it is the *Divine Nature* : Let it suffice to tell you , that unbelief will go very near the heart of your Father ; if any thing could be said to break his heart , it would be this . His Enemies , the Prophane ones of the world , do vex and anger him , but you

you are the people that grieve him; your sins do trouble him, at a higher rate than theirs, and, of all your sins, unbelief most of all. Oh therefore, if God have any considerable Interest in your hearts, let unbelief have none. Oh do not grieve the Spirit of God that would comfort you; If you sadden the Spirit of the Lord by your Distrust, how shall he comfort you in your Distress?

Thirdly, Consider, You will lose the most glorious opportunity of honouring God and Religion, that ever was put into your hands; nay, perhaps thou mayst never have the like again: God has brought thee into a Wilderness, that thou mayst give thy Testimony, and set to thy Seal, that God is true. Men will observe, and, if ever, now they will believe it: they take little notice what thou sayst of God in prosperity; the Devil excepted against *Job's* Testimony in this case: But, says he, put forth thy hand and touch all that he hath, and he

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will

will curse thee to thy face.

It is no proof of sincerity, to speak well of God, while he does well to us; or to follow Christ while he hath the Loaves: but, to follow him in a wilderness, in a Land not sown; yea, to follow him cheerfully too, will make men take notice of, and regard our Testimony that we bear to his Goodness, All-sufficiency, and Truth. He that runs may read in thy cheerful behaviour under streights that God is good, because thou speakest good of him at all times; that he is All sufficient, because you can be contented, yea, full, and abundant in the want of all things, having him; that he is True and Faithful, because you can embrace the Promises, and live upon them, when all Providences run contrary to them. Oh Christians, If ever you would have the world believe that God is good, yea, the Chief Good, that he is to be chosen for himself, that he is your Portion, and enough when alone.

lone; and that you have chosen him so, and do not repent your choice. If ever you would convince men that God is True, and that he never fails those that seek him; bear your Testimony to these things in a Wilderness; then men will believe you. Walk but evenly and cheerfully in the streights that he brings you, and his people into; and you will perswade men more, than a thousand Sermons possibly will do; but if you lose such an opportunity, never look to honour God at that rate while you live.

Fourthly, Consider, Distrust of God hath no excuse. Though men have many pleas for it, yet when thy eyes are opened, thou wilt have no cloak for it. It is impossible for a Child of God to be brought into any streight, or to experience any trouble or difficulty in any condition, for which God hath not provided some surable word of Promise. It would be too long a work for me to undertake,

take, to shew you what provisions God hath made for the Comfort and Support of his people in all estates. If I should descend to particulars, I should not know where to stop: I shall only hint what care he hath taken for the general Interest of his people, when he brings his Church into a Wilderness, as he did *Israel*.

This is a certain truth, that God never calls his people into a Wilderness, but he gives them Bread in their Hands, or sends it thither before them, that they may live and feed upon it in their streights. As God sent *Joseph* before to provide for *Jacob*, and to keep him and his family alive in the Famine: So does he send Provision before, for the Faith of his people, *Psal. 74. 14. Thou brakest the heads of the Dragon in the water; thou brakest the head of the Leviathan in pieces, and gavest him to be meat to the people, inhabiting the wilderness.* *Israel* was, but is now, entering into a barren howling
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Wilderness; and that he might not faint for want of Provision for his Faith, he gives him a miraculous Deliverance from the Red-Sea, and *Pharaoh*; the experience of which was enough for their Faith to feed upon, in all the Difficulties they should afterwards meet with: Had they understood and improved this Deliverance, they would never have provoked God by Distrust in the Wilderness.

Object. But you may ask, *what Provision hath God made for his people, now in the wilderness?*

Answer. First, You have the Prophecies of the Troubles which shall befall the Church of God, and the Persecutions which should arise. If we be surprised at any time, it is our own fault, God hath warned us, and furnished us with all his Armour, he hath bid us put it on, and be always shod with the preparation of the Gospel of Peace. Now expectation of evil, is a great preparation to the bear-

bearing of it : This Christ intimates, when he says, *John 16. 1. These things have I told you, that you might not be offended.* What an unreasonable thing is it to distrust God, because his Word is true ? He hath told us that through many Tribulations, we must enter into the Kingdom of Heaven, and if we will live godlily, we must suffer Persecution ; now when we find what he hath foretold of this, proves true ; why should we not believe all the Promises which he hath joyned * to these Predictions ? Are not his Promises as true, as any part of his Word ? And hath not he that foretold our Troubles, promised to bear us up under them, carry us through them, and to do us good by them ?

Secondly, You have all the Promises of the good which God hath to bring upon his people in the latter days ; and these are so made, that you may expect their fulfilling in the darkest times ; and this present Age is
not

not exempted from seeing the glory of them.

Though many have been too bold to fix upon the time, and have miscarried in their Conjectures, asserting, the time to be come, for the making good of such and such Promises to the Church, and for the utter destruction of Antichrist; yet this we may confidently affirm, this Generation is not excluded from hoping to see these things. Now the consideration that God hath made glorious Promises to his Church, and that we are allowed to hope for the Accomplishment of them in our days, is enough to carry us patiently and chearfully thorow all intervening Difficulties. Nay, had we a promise only of many years yet to come, as *Abraham* had of *Canaan*, yet it should be a marvellous support to us, to think that it should be well with the Church of God, in the Generations to come.

Thirdly, We have all our own and the Churches Deliverances, in former

former times. What ever God hath done for any of us, or for his people in time of trouble, or for the preservation of his Church under Persecution, or Deliverance of it from Captivity, it is all our meat in the Wilderness.

Fourthly, We have many choise and precious Promises made to such a state. No Condition hath so much of Succour or Comfort promised to it, as this.

For Support, I'll name but two, which are sufficient to bear up our hearts, *Isa. 43. 1, 2.* But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, oh Jacob, and he that formed thee, oh Israel, Fear not: For I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy Name, thou art mine. When thou passest thorow the waters, I will be with thee, and thorow the Rivers, they shall not overflow thee; When thou walkest thorow the fire, thou shalt not be burnt, neither shall the Flame kindle upon thee: For, I am the Lord thy God, &c.

When

When was this promise made? *Now*, saith the Lord: If we look to the close of the precedent Chapter, we shall find, it was when *Israel* was given up to Robbers, and *Jacob* to the Spoil: But wherefore was this perhaps it was only for trial? No, it was for their Disobedience, because they would not walk in his ways, Chap. 42. 24. But, possibly, this was but some light transitory Affliction: No, it was accompanied with all Expressions of Dread and Terrour. Here is Anger, yea the fury of anger, and this poured out upon him; here is the Battel, and that made strong against him: Here's fire, yea *Israel* set on fire, and that round about, compassed in with trouble on all hands; and, which is worst of all, he not laying this to heart. *Israel* sins, and God visits his sin, yet he sins under this Visitation; yet, which is wonderful, *Israel* must not fear; God will be with him to support him under these troubles. What an Argument

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ment is here, for the Faith of Gods people, when they suffer for Righteousness?

Will God forsake those who suffer for disobeying his will? how much more those, who suffer for observing it? If he will be with his people under Afflictions which he brings upon them; for not walking in his ways; how can he forsake them in troubles, which men bring upon them, for observing his Command? Surely, God will go thorow fire and water with these: As he was with the three Children in the fire, and with Israel in the water; so will he be with his people in all their streights: And what is fire and water when God is in them, with us?

We have a promise in the New Testament, which confirms all this to us, *Heb. 13. 5. He hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.* The Apostle improves this against all the occasions of Distrust, which are either outward wants, or sufferings

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and Persecutions from men. To the first, he says, *Be content with such things as you have; for he hath said, I will never leave thee.* What can he be said to want, who is sure of having God, and knows what it is to enjoy him. Against the second, He reasons from the same Foundation: So that we may boldly say, the Lord is my Helper. If God be with us, it will not be as a Spectator, but as a Helper; and he may be bold in any trouble, that can be bold to say that God is with him. He need not fear what man can do to him, who is assured that God will stand by him, and strengthen him.

Secondly, As God hath promised great Supports, so he hath provided as great Comforts for his people, in their Suffering low estate. See *Mat. 5. 10. Blessed are they which are persecuted for Righteousness-sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.* They are blessed in their Afflictions, under all their Persecutions; so that

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where ever you see such a man or woman, how ever miserable their present Condition may seem in the eyes of others, let them not seem so to you; say you, There is a blessed man, or a blessed woman: *There is the Kingdom of Heaven.* It is not only sure to them notwithstanding their Troubles and Sufferings, but they are the more assured of it by them. God gives the greatest and clearest Evidences of their Interests in Heaven at such a time; God opens the Heavens to them, as he did to Stephen, *Acts 7. 55, 56.* Then, if ever, God pours out of the abundance of his Spirit, upon his people. The Apostle therefore doth not lay down as a Promise, or speak of it as a Futurity, but asserts it as a thing present; it is as sure to be so, as if you felt it so in this instant of time. The like Expression we have, *1 Pet. 4. 14.* *If ye be reproached for the Name of Christ, happy are ye, for the Spirit of glory resteth on you.* Mark it Christian,

ans, You shall not only have the Spirit of God, but it shall be a degree reaching to Glory; it is above the measures of Grace and Comfort, commonly attainable in this state of Imperfection: He says not, This shall come in, or after troubles, but he speaks of it as present; if one comes, so does the other: *If ye be reproached, happy are ye, &c.* If reproaches for Christ come, then glory comes with them.

Nay it comes not to leave you suddenly, it comes to abide with you; if Reproaches and Disgrace stick fast upon you, the Spirit of Glory will *rest* upon you also.

Fifthly, God hath promised all the outward glory and prosperity of his Church, to such a Condition. It shall be given her in a Wilderness, and from thence she shall ascend glorious, *Hos. 2. 14, 15. I will allure her, and bring her into the wilderness, and speak comfortably unto her. And I will give her her Vinyards from thence,*

and the valley of Achor, for a door of Hope, and she shall sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up out of the Land of Egypt. It is very plain from hence, that God will take a course with his people, in the fulfilling his Promises to them, much like the way he took to bring them into *Canaan*. He will first carry them into a Wilderness, and from thence will God give them those great mercies which he hath reserved for them, *Cant.* 3. 6, 7, 8. There we find the Church coming up out of the Wilderness, and presently we find her furnished with able and expert Guides, and adorned with all that may render it lovely.

Now, considering all these things, Predictions, Experiences, and Promises: Have we not Meat to eat in the Wilderness, and will it not be shameful and inexcusable to faint, when God hath made such Provision to live upon?

Fifthly, Consider, Unbelief will

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be your Affliction; as well as your Sin; it will be a grief to your own spirits, as well as to the Lord; you will be your own Tormentors, and contribute more to the making your selves miserable, than all your enemies: We have enemies enow to afflict us, let us not afflict our selves *Gzaband Armon*; Or let us not be against our selves, and add affliction to affliction. For it will make all possible evils, probable; those which are uncertain, certain; those which are far off, to be near; and those that are future, present. Avoid therefore Distrust, as the greatest affliction that can befall thee.

Sixthly, Consider, Your unbelief will not only be your own affliction, but it may be so to those who are not involved in the same guilt with you; you may be the Instruments of hindring the good that may come upon the present Generation; your unbelief, may hinder many believing souls from the Mercy which they are fitted

for; they may wait a great while longer, because you are not prepared for it; as we see, the unbelief of *Israel* kept *Josuah* and *Caleb*, out of the Land of *Canaan* Forty years. They were ready and prepared to enter into *Canaan*, when they first spied out the Land: but *Israels* unbelief hindered them from entering, and they also must wait Forty years, till another Generation is made ready. Take heed therefore of that which will afflict thee, and make thee an affliction to many others.

Seventhly, Consider, That Distrust doth of all sins, deny thy Christianity. What is a Christian, but a Believer? One that walks by Faith, and not by Sight? Thou art of a contrary frame: How wilt thou prove thy self a Christian, without following Christ? And how wilt thou follow Christ without believing? Thou mayst follow Providence, by Sense; but thou canst not be said to follow Christ, but by Faith. Therefore resolve

olve, either to lay by thy Christia-
nity, or cast out thy unbelief.

Eighthly, Make provision against
this sin, yea, all the Provision you
can, and you will find all little e-
nough. For Consider, That you
will surely meet with Temptations to
this, more than to any other. Your
way to Heaven lies thorow dif-
ficulties and streights; your way lies
not among Drunkards, Swearers, or
unclean Persons; you may not meet
with *Noah's*, or *Joseph's* Temptations,
but your way lies thorow the V. Vil-
derness, and you will surely meet
with *Israels* Temptations, to distrust
God. Thorow many Tribulations
you must enter into the Kingdom of
Heaven. Expect Temptations sut-
able to your Condition; and a thou-
sand to one, if you find not your heart
very ready to close with Temptations
of this Nature: for there is nothing
more natural to us, than to walk by
Sense and to listen to the Dictates of
Carnal Reason. Expectation of evil
purs.

puts us upon making suitable provision for it. And that you may the better stand against such Temptations when they come. Mind these few things,

First, Possess thy self fully of God's Providence. If he take care for the Ravens, how much more for his people.

Secondly, Believe firmly that there is not a Providence to thee, but comes thorow the Covenant of Grace.

Thrdly, All the Providences of God, do serve his Promises, and tend to the Accomplishing of them, though they seem otherwise.

Fourthly, View often the Experiences that thou hast had of Gods Mercy and Goodness, and labour to fortifie thy confidence in God from thence. As *David*, *Psal.* 23. 6. And *Paul*, *2 Cor.* 1. 10. It is a good Argument, He that hath delivered, will deliver, if we depend upon him, and plead former Mercies with him.

Fifthly, Reason with thy heart, when thou findest it beginning to sink,

sink ; say, Why art thou cast down, oh my soul. Resolve never to suffer thy heart to be unreasonably disquieted, and thou shalt never find a Reason, for a Distrustful Sadness, or Dejection.

Sixthly, Be sure to make God thy Portion, take him for thine Inheritance; account him alone enough for thee. Do not reckon any thing besides him, needful to make thee happy, but esteem thy self sufficiently blessed in thy Interest in him, and Communion with him. A heart brought to this, will live in a Wilderness: and, as less than this, will not give us comfort, so it will not prove us Christians.

Seventhly, Lay this upon thy heart, as a duty to be thankful in every Condition. Study what thou enjoyest, as well as what thou wantest; what matter of Thanksgiving, as well as of Petition; and if Prayer and Praise go together, see what will follow, *Phil. 4. 6, 7.* If your wants do
not

not swallow up your Mercies , but you make your Requests known with Thanksgiving as well as Supplication, the Peace of God which passes all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Jesus Christ. You shall have a marvellous calmness and sweetness of Spirit, which shall keep your minds quiet and stable, in the midst of all your troubles.

Use 3.

The third Use of this Point is for Direction, to teach us how to carry our selves whensoever God brings us into a Wilderness.

First, Labour to secure God to you. be sure make him yours; renew your choice of him, and perfect your resolutions of cleaving to him; if you be clear in the justifying Acts of Faith, the Comforting Acts will be more easie and rational. It is sad being without God in a Wilderness
doubt

doubts about thy Interest in him; can never meet thee more unseasonably than now. *Moses* understood this so well, that he would not stir out of the Wilderness without God, *Exod.* 33. 15. He knew it was better being in a Wilderness with God, than in *Canaan* without him: And if *Canaan* that flowed with Milk and Hony be so uncomfortable without God, what then will a Wilderness be, which is barren and destitute of all other Comforts.

Secondly, Have an eye constantly upon God, to direct your way. The Children of *Israel* were to have an eye upon the Cloud in the Wilderness, and to move as that moved, and to stand still, when that stood still. Acquaint your selves with the Word of God, this will give Light to your Paths, in the darkest times. Labour to know your Duty, and be found in it, so shall the way of Providence be comfortable to you, though you understand it not at present.

Third-

Thirdly, Carry your Bread in your hands with you. The *Israelites* took their Dough in their Kneading-Troughs with them, when they went out of *Egypt*, *Exod.* 12. 34. But this was soon spent, but God gave them Bread at the Red-Sea, which was for them to feed upon during their Travels, *Psal.* 74. 14. This Bread which is your experience of Gods Mercy and Truth, you must be sure to keep with you, else you will be apt to faint. And beside this, Take the Bread of Sincerity and Truth, *1 Cor.* 5. 8. this Bread will not only sustain, but comfort your hearts; it will be a continual Feast, *Prov.* 15. 15. By a merry heart is meant here, an upright honest heart; for none beside this can be truly merry, and this ought always to be merry and joyful.

Fourthly, Beware of Presumption as well as Distrust; As you must not be discouraged because you can see no way in it; so you must not presume

to be very

to make your own way out of it.

If God bring you into a Wilderness, let him alone to bring you out; only follow him, go his way, wait his time. Take heed of presuming upon your own strength, and running before the Lord: It cost *Israel* dear for presuming to go up without warrant, out of the Wilderness against the *Canaanites* in the Mountains, *Num.* 14-40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45.

Fifthly, Look upon the Mercy you desire and wait for, not thorow the Providences of God, but thorow the Promises, for they may represent it as a thing afar off, when the other will tell you it is near. As for the fall of Antichrist, we would think it far off, if we look upon his Pomp, Power, Interests, and Councils; but let us look upon the Word of God, and it will tell you, he shall fall in an hour, suddenly, when he is not aware of it.

Sixthly, Study Faith and Patience, the very Exercise of these are of great
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advantage to you, if God have no other design but to prove and improve these, it is worth your going into the Wilderness, 1 Pet. 1, 7. *It is a precious thing, to have our Faith tried, though it be by fire,* says the Apostle. But why is it so? Because God intends highly to honour the Faith of his people at last: He'll praise it, yea, which is more, he'll honour it; nay, he'll put the highest honour upon it that can be; for he'll put a glory upon it. When God shall call the whole world together, he will then tell the story of your lives, before men and Angels; and that which He will insist upon, to magnifie and extol in your lives, shall be your Faith. Lo, here is one that followed me in a Wilderness, in a Land that was not sown, that would believe my word against all that Men or Devils, could suggest to the contrary; nay, all that I could do, could not make him distrust what I said. Thus will God honour Faith, when it is found in a wil-

VVilderness. I might press you to study and exercise this, from several Considerations. But Ile but add two,

First, God will take it kindly, yea, exceeding kindly, if thou followest him believingly in a VVilderness. I do not know any thing that is more acceptable to him, than this: See this in Israel, *Jer. 2. 2. I remember the kindness of thy youth, the Love of thine Espousals when thou wentest after me in a wilderness, in a Land that was not sown.* The Lord took this so kindly, that he is mindful of it many Generations afterwards; yea, he would not forget this at a time, when he was highly provoked, and was about to remove them out of their Land for their Iniquities. Shew kindness to God this way, and thou hast ingaged him to be kind to thee, as long as thou livest; nay, it may be remembered to thy Childrens Children.

Secondly, You will not only find

God kind to you, but in so doing you will be kind to your own souls. You will find a believing frame of spirit exceeding comfortable: Faith will fetch in those comforts which you want, and put you into the possession of those Mercies which you wait for. It will make your Comforts real, and your wants but seeming: Mark the Expression of the Apostle, 2 Cor. 6, 10. *As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, yet possessing all things.*

Our wants and our troubles, seem to be great and many, but they are but Shadows and Phantasms; they exist most in opinion of others: but our Comforts and Enjoyments are substantial. While we seem to be sorrowful, we are alway joyful, and while we seem to have nothing, we do really possess all things. He enjoys God in Christ who is all in all, and in Patience he possesseth his own soul: and he is content with those things which

which he hath, and so hath as much comfort, as if he had the actual enjoyment of all the world. A Believer's enjoyments under wants, are more real than an Unbeliever's are in the midst of all his plenty and fulness; for an unbeliever's comforts and enjoyments are but seeming; he is as if he had all things, but his wants are real, he possesseth nothing. Therefore walk by Faith, and you will have more comfort in your streights, than other men have in their greatest abundance.

And as you must study Faith, so be sure to let Patience have her perfect work, *Jam, 1. 4.* for if any thing will perfect you, this will do it; Patience nourishes and cherishes every grace in the soul, and raises them to the greatest degrees of perfection attainable here. God often times does that by streights and troubles, which would not be effected by all our Liberty and Prosperity; and all other means.

Seventhly, Draw no Conclusion from any Providence, till thou hast lookt over former times, and compared it with things which are past, whether it be Publick or Private, whether it respects the Church of God, or thine own Person or Family. Suppose thou shouldest see the Church of God in great affliction, yet look back and see how it was when *Moses* was born : Hadst thou lived in those days, would not thy heart have sunk with fear much more ? There was a design to root out *Israel*. Look to the present Generation, they were Slaves to the *Egyptians* ; they were wearied with making Bricks, and in the next Generation, their Names were like to be blotted out. The Male-Children must be all kill'd, and because the Midwives would not do it, the common people must be Commissioned for that purpose, *Exod.* 1. 22. What fears and cares must they needs have whose Children lay at the mercy of every Villain, who might at their plea

sure snatch them from their Mothers Breasts, and dash their Brains out against the stones: Here was nothing but Death to be expected for their little ones, and miserable slavery for themselves. Here was no hope of Freedom from hence; a Banishment, though it had been into a howling Wilderness, would have been counted a Mercy. These were troubles indeed, yet God delivered his people from these; though the Bush did burn, yet it was not consumed.

Hadst thou lived in *Jezabels* days, What wouldst thou have said concerning the Lord's Prophet, when she hunted after *Elijah's* life? Surely they will be all cut off. When the Prophets were to be found in Caves only, (*1 Kings* 18. 13.) hid to secure their lives; yet God preserved them, and fed them with Bread and Water. Or, hadst thou lived in the days of wicked *Haman*, when the Decree was gone forth against all the people of God, and the time to destroy and to kill

kill them, was appointed and fixt by an unalterable Decree; and these poor people had great and potent Enemies, who waited for the Execution of it, who thirsted for the blood of these poor *Jews*: Wouldst thou not now, have given up all for lost? Yet, then God steps in, and by wonderful Providences delivers them, and brings their Enemies in their room.

Or for thy own parricular; wer't thou ever brought lower than *Joseph* was in *Egypt*? That from a Slave was made a Prisoner, and had, beside his Irons, the weight of a great mans Displeasure laid upon him, and this in a strange Country, where he had none to pittie, or to help him? Yet see what Issue God gave to his troubles.

Or was it ever so bad with thee as with *David* who was banisht his own Country, and in a strange Land, is at once stript of all he hath; his wives, Children, Goods at once taken away, and that which added to his Affliction,

fiction, none of the people pity him, but loaded him with their Curses and Threatnings; they talked of stoning him, 1 Sam. 30. 6. *But David encouraged himself, in the Lord his God.*

What ever thy Condition be, upon inquiry thou wilt see, it is no other than what the people of God have passed thorow heretofore, and the consideration that others have past thorow it before, is matter of hope to thee. He that hath delivered, can still deliver, his Arm is not shortened. Nay, shouldest thou find any thing that should make thy Condition more sad and dismal, than any that thou canst think upon, yet it will not justifie thy Distrusts; for doubtless *Israel* had no Precedents of any people delivered from such a Bondage, as *Egypt*, or provided for in such a Wilderness as they were to pass thorow; yet their Distrust was a Provocation. But if thy Condition could be singular from all that ever were in the world before thee, then to depend upon God were an honour to your Faith; whereas Dependence in this cause where we have Precedents, are but the nobler Exercises of Reason. Believe once for thy Justification, and thou mayst reason out thy Comfort and Protection; for this follows undeniably, *Rom. 32. If God hath given thee Christ, how shall*

shall he not with him, freely give thee all things. When thou hast closed with Christ, and interested thy self in God by Faith, it is the work of Reason to shake off all doubts and fears. Thus did *David*, *Psal.* 43. 5. 11. reason with his heart against D. j. ction.

Ask but a Reason of thy heart for being troubled, and thy trouble will vanish; for thou hast no more reason for thy fears, and disquiets than a wicked man hath for his hopes and joys; they both arise from want of consideration, *Psal.* 116. 11. *I said in my haste, all men are lyars.* A Christians fears arise through haste, and a due and right exercise of Reason will quell them all, because there is no Reason for them; they cannot indure a strict Examination: And how much better is it to have fears, that are groundless, and hopes that are reasonable (as the Godly have,) than groundless hopes, and reasonable well grounded fears, as every wicked man hath.

Eighthly, Do not onely labour against Unbelief and Distrust, but strive for the highest acts of Faith, endeavour not only to hope, but to rejoyce; not only to be patient, but thankful; think it not enough that thou dost escape these Rocks upon which the people of God, have been ready to stumble in thy Condition; but strive to imitate those

those that have excelled, and done worthily in the like case: the *11th.* to the *Hebrews*, will afford you many glorious Examples. Remember that God expects more from you, then he did from *Israel* in the Wilderness, he calls you to higher and more noble duties, because he hath revealed more Grace, and given greater helps to you: Two things especially God expects from you more than he did from them.

First, All patience, and long-suffering with joyfulness, *Col. 1. 11.*

Secondly, To give thanks in every thing, *1 Thes. 5. 18.* These are difficult, yet these are your duties, especially who live under the Gospel. It was well if *Israel* could bear some of Gods Providences, for them to hold up under them without murmuring, was much; but God requires of you not only to submit, but to be thankful, not only to bear Affliction patient'y, but joyfully.

Look not therefore on your Afflictions and Troubles, as a way to Heaven, but look for Heaven in them; let your expectations of Glory increase with your increase of Troubles in the world; look for, labour for, and express a Spirit of Glory resting upon your spirits.

To Conclude, Stand still and consider, and considering admire the goodness of God,

God, who hath so provided for thee in this world, that thou mayst be Afflicted and Persecuted, but thou canst not be miserable; there is no Condition in which thou hast not cause of rejoycing: If thou art without Comfort, it is thine own fault, God hath made provision that thy joy may be full. Thou canst not fall so low, but thou mayst hold fast on the Lord who is able to raise thee up; and whatever thy Condition be, it is not only no Presumption, but it is thy Duty to hope in him; he hath not only allowed, but Commanded thee to hope in him: And believe Christian, a commanded confidence cannot miscarry; such a hope will not make thee ashamed.

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